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A design-research of counselling forming personalisation in vocational education in Finland

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Title of conference paper: A design-research of counselling forming personalisation in vocational education in Finland

In this presentation we examine results from, and parts of processes within, a design-based research (DBR) developing counselling systems of individualised competence-based learning in upper secondary Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Finland. In the DBR we are collaborating with two VET schools.

Requirements defined at a high political level to ‘meet the needs of students and working life’ (FMEC, 2017; OECD, 2014) recently reformed the fundamental foundation of VET (Law 531/2017). In the new educational setting *qualification requirements* replaced curriculum, *competence-points* barred study weeks, and *qualification by personalisation* scattered learning to individual puzzles of culturally diverging contexts of school-based learning (SBL) vs. work-based learning (WBL). The normative solution for structuring the dispersed paths are the ‘*personal competence development plan*’ (PCDP) (531/2017:5, §44-49).

In line with the reform, funding models for VET was changed to reward efficiency, performance and educational outcomes (see FMEC, 2020). Therefore, implementations of the new requirements are questions of financial sustainability, in addition to social, ethical and cultural issues of learning at the practical level of activity. Meeting goals significant for funding (system level) is now crucial at the level of core-activity (learning). We are focusing on how these requirements of change are dealt with in systems forming PCDPs. We ask: how can systems of educational counselling be developed towards meeting the new requirements of personalisation?

We analysed data from ethnographic observations (n = 29) of counselling situations forming PCDPs, and semi-structured interviews (n = 12) of counsellors administering PCDPs. In the analyse, inspired by activity theory (Engeström, 2014), themes constructed from the coding was explored to artefacts, which are further developed in collaboration with practitioners towards implementable models (e.g. McKenney & Reeves, 2013) in the counselling activity.

Our study shows examples of how counselling activities are struggling towards meeting newly set requirements, and how themes are forming developmental positions. Such are the individual relations of SBL–WBL combinations, and how counselling is meeting different individual needs for special support. Additionally, both to be positioned in the PCDP. Here, DBR can be fruitful in order to broaden the common understanding of connections between science and practice.

Key words: Vocational Education and Training, design-based research, competence-based learning, personalisation

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